

Says It's Not His Job

Attorney Begins Route A Acquisition

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Wasatch County Attorney Steve Hansen said he has begun the process of acquiring right-of-ways for Route "A" along the southeast shore of Jordanelle Reservoir, but says it should be the responsibility of the U.S. Attorney's office.

He said he advised Commissioner Chairman Lorin Allred not to sign an agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation which stated that the \$11 million budgeted for

the highway included the costs to acquire right-of-ways. The problem wasn't that the cost would come out of the \$11 million, because the county had already agreed to that, he said. "What bothered me was that the county only agreed to *assist* the Bureau in seeking donations from the private landowners for the right-of-way. The county never agreed that, if they do not donate, we would pursue the acquisition. We

are not staffed to undertake a project of that magnitude, if the private landowners refuse our offers and we have to go into condemnation or litigation to acquire the ground," he said.

He stated the county's position in a meeting with representatives of the U.S. Attorney's office and the Bureau, telling them the county would not sign the agreement to "acquire" the right-of-ways.

He said he told them, "The U.S. Attorney's office should handle the property acquisition because they are handling [it] for U.S. 40, Route 'C,' and all of the ground for the reservoir... The state has lawyers and appraisers and people from the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) who do this routinely all over the state when state roads are built... The UDOT acquisition staff somehow influenced the U.S. Attorney's office to acquire the land for the state roads [at Jordanelle], yet the Bureau and U.S. Attorney's office haven't agreed to do it for the county."

Nevertheless, he said he was left with the impression it's up to the county to get the land, although the county has only one appraiser and he runs a one-man law office.

He reported he wrote to the landowners, asking if they would be willing to donate their land, but that at least two had refused.

"So I'm preparing to undertake the project to acquire the right-of-way for Route 'A.' I think it's unfair for the Bureau and the U.S. Attorney's office not to assist Wasatch County... The issues which relate to the property in that area should be handled by one government agency, because the value of the land in that area would seem to be somewhat consistent from Route 'A,' to Route 'C,' to U.S. 40, to the ground flooded by the reservoir."

He pointed out that some of the landowners own property that is needed for both Route "A" and the reservoir. "It doesn't make any sense for two different governmental bodies to be dealing with the same landowners on the value of the property... It needs to be coordinated between the different appraisers and attorneys, in dealing with the value of all of that land, as well as other legal issues..."

"Route 'A' will open up that mountain to additional uses, so the highway's going to be a benefit to those people and we hoped to get it donated. If not, we are prepared to acquire it."